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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses conditions in teacher preparation which increase the chances of student teachers experiencing severe difficulty in their practicum assignments. Focus is on practical and ethical issues, offering suggestions for changing some present programmatic conditions in order to achieve optimal development of beginning teachers. Emphasis is placed on sensitivity about the need for high levels of care when dealing with potentially unsuccessful student teachers; role models presented to prospective teachers; facilitating the development of student teachers so that they become ethical, concerned teachers; and the need for discussion of ethical concerns in preservice teacher education. Many issues raised emanate from dilemmas faced by those responsible for elements of preservice teacher education. These include dilemmas related to time, finances, personnel, and accreditation requirements. The need for high standards of ethical caring implies a variety of actions such as: more selective admission criteria; more humane, person-centered, and appropriate career guidance; early remedial activities or direct exit counseling; enhanced and more intense supervision of student teachers; responsible placements with cooperating teachers who have perspectives that are not massively incongruent with student or practice teachers; and debriefing during and after student teaching. (Contains 33 references.) (Author/LL)

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ADDRESSING "FAILURE" IN STUDENT TEACHING: SOME PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

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Abstract

This paper attempts to address some conditions in teacher preparation which increase the chances of student or practice teachers experiencing severe difficulty in their practicum assignments. We focus on practical and ethical issues, offering suggestions for changing some present programmatic conditions. The impetus for making these suggestions come directly our research on "failure" in student or practice teaching (Knowles & Sudzina, 1991; Sudzina & Knowles, 1992) as well as from the relatively scant literature on the topic. We also loosely draw from what we know about the optimal development of beginning teachers.

We are especially sensitive about the need for high levels of care when dealing with potentially unsuccessful student or practice teachers–and, indeed, all preservice teachers. Similarly, we are mindful of the role models we present to prospective teachers, and we wish to facilitate their development, urging them to become ethical, caring, concerned teachers. We support the need for ethical concerns to be brought to the fore and openly discussed in preservice teacher education settings.

Many of the issues we raise emanate from dilemmas faced by those responsible for elements of preservice teacher education; these include dilemmas related to time, finances, personnel, and accreditation requirements. The need for high standards of ethical caring, we believe, implies a variety of actions such as: more selective admission criteria; more humane, person-centered and appropriate career guidance; early remedial activities or direct exit counseling; enhanced and more intense supervision of student teachers; responsible placements with cooperating teachers who have perspectives that are not massively incongruent with student or practice teachers; debriefing during and after student teaching, and other issues.

ADDRESSING "FAILURE" IN STUDENT TEACHING: SOME PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Finding literature and research which deals specifically with "failure" in student or practice teaching is difficult at best,[1] as we have previously pointed out (Knowles & Sudzina, 1991, Sudzina & Knowles, 1992; see, also, Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).[2] While research on evaluation of preservice teachers and teacher education programs is widely available (see, e.g., Galluzo & Craig, 1990; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990), the phenomenon of "failing" student or practice teaching is given scant or no mention in most explorations of the general problems of preservice teacher education.

The more general literature on preservice teacher education reveals an interesting paradox: While Lanier and Little (1986), for example, maintain that too many persons with excessively low scores on academic measures are allowed into teaching, Johnson and Yates (1982), as well as Koehler (1984; see, also Freeman, Martin, Brousseau & West, 1989), note that very low percentages of student teachers actually receive a failing grade in their student or practice teaching practica. Nevertheless, while we documented elements of the general problem (Knowles & Sudzina, 1991, Sudzina & Knowles, 1992), more important in our thinking is the resolution of the practical and ethical issues associated with alleviating this phenomenon–and this is the focus of this paper.

While we place importance on practical and ethical issues in teacher education, as they are formed by our insights from the study of "failure", we also

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[1]This and the other symposium paper presentations associated with this paper (i.e., Coolican, 1992; Arbreton, 1992; Sudzina & Knowles, 1992; Skrobola & Knowles, 1992) are an attempt to correct this dearth of understanding about issues surrounding "failure" in practice teaching. We wish to encourage a research focus on this matter as we believe it offers unique opportunities for insights into our practices as teacher educators. Research that focused on "failure" and that informed or previous work includes Ellwein, Graue & Comfort (1989), Knowles (1988), Knowles & Hoefler (1989), Pape & Dickens (1990), Riner & Jones (1990), Schwab (1889), and Stones & Webster (1984).

[2]Other literature which may be helpful in thinking about this topic include, Clark (1990), Sockett (1990), and Sirotnik (1990).

recognize that ethical and moral concerns in teacher education are central in the thinking of others. For example, Socket (1990) reminds us of the centrality of an ethic of caring in preservice teacher education. And, as an aside, we sense that role modeling of ethical behaviors associated with preservice teacher education to be lacking, not because teacher educators, like ourselves, are not ethical but because those ethical actions and thinking are not often made explicit to those learning along with us in preservice teacher preparation programs.

Our Perspectives and Purposes

Our understanding of "failure" in practice or student teaching[3] is to a large degree dictated by the way in which we both approached and experienced the problem (see, Knowles & Sudzina, 1991, Sudzina & Knowles, 1992). We wanted to uncover the characteristics of those who "failed". We were interested in exploring the "failures" of practice teachers so that ultimately, among other things, we could as teacher educators: (a) more effectively select preservice teacher education candidates;[4] (b) more effectively evaluate the ongoing performances of those selected and facilitate their professional development; (c) gain insights into pitfalls associated with practicum evaluation processes and the biases and preconceptions of those who evaluate prospective teachers;[5] (d) gain insights into inappropriate instructional contexts and methods–including problems with our

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[3]Throughout the paper we deliberately use the terms "student or practice teaching" and "student or practice teacher". Our purpose is to draw attention to the clumsiness of both the structure and the intent of the major practicum or period of practice. Are the prospective teachers "student teaching" or "practice teaching"? Is it the singular most important practical preservice experience that prospective teachers have? If, indeed, we wish to establish greater credibility with other professions, and give potential new teachers the credibility they deserve as they enter the field, then we have to do more than change the name of the activity; we need to rethink its purpose, potential outcomes, structure, context, and duration, to identify several aspects that are long overdue for an overhaul. Much needs to be done–and we have revealed our intents.

[4]The task of selection may be more important in the case of programs where undergraduate students are admitted in their first or second year and in the cases of older second-career preservice teachers. Others, especially those admitted after three or four years of undergraduate coursework, have, in a sense, been screened several times by the point of admission to programs.

[5]Usually there are at least two evaluators of student or practice teachers–cooperating/facilitating teachers and university supervisors.

pedagogy–and preparation programs in general, so that formal requirements might better serve practice teachers' goals and needs; and, (e) suggest alternative practical and ethical courses for preservice teacher preparation programs.[6]

Having said this, we do not wish to promote a reductionist or behavioral perspective which suggests that we can carefully control the kinds of people that are prepared in formal programs of preservice teacher education. We are not looking to psychologically define or mold future teachers to some pre-defined image. We do not, for instance, seek to develop a profile of the ideal preservice teacher from which we would systematically work towards facilitating in individuals' development. Nor do we wish to develop a profile of characteristics of individuals whom we automatically exclude from entry into the profession of teaching. Common sense and insights from the teacher education literature at large strain against these kinds of positions.

We do, however, intend to promote the development of more responsive and responsible teacher education programs. And, we also wish to encourage prospective teacher applicants to be more selective in their choice of preparation programs and institutions. Nevertheless, we urge greater attention to the matter of admission to formal preparation programs[7] and to the selection of practicum sites, as well as the selection of cooperating teachers and supervisors.

Thus, the paper discusses alternatives to some programmatic elements which sometimes promote inappropriate, dysfunctional, or malfunctional conditions in preservice teacher preparation–and which do not serve students of

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[6]On this last point we recognize that recent accreditation requirements, such as those of NCATE attend to improving, among other things, the thematic foci of programs.

[7]Our defensiveness arises out of criticisms of research which explores the relationships between beginning teachers personal histories/biographies and teaching practices. Critics maintain that, ultimately, such research may have the intent to narrowly define appropriate prior experiences for teachers.

teaching well.[8] In so doing, we first present a brief summary of our findings from previous work (see, Knowles & Sudzina, 1991; Sudzina & Knowles, 1992) and, second, we focus on practical and contextual issues associated with improving the student or practice teaching practicum.

Summary of Findings

While our study of "failure" was exploratory, and we do not intent to make generalizations, the findings are a productive place to begin to discuss and remediate the problem of failure. The factors which contribute to "failure" are represented in Table 1. We provide categories in which inappropriate or poor performance in one or a number of them often result in "failed" student or practice teaching.

Table 1 about here

Improving and Rethinking Practice and Contexts

The following discussion represents some of our thinking about matters central to the issue of "failure" in student or practice teaching; we draw on the conclusions and implications from our previous and immediate work (see, Knowles & Sudzina, 1991, Sudzina & Knowles, 1992).[9] As we see it, there are two major implications from our explorations of "failure". One implication is that we modify current practices. The second is that we rethink the usefulness of student or practice teaching as it is generally and currently conceived, arranged, and

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[8]This paper is part of a collection of other papers which center on the issue of failure. All, bar one of the participants in the symposium presentation associated with this paper (i.e., Nancy Skrobola, and see also footnote 1) have had some personal experience with "failure" in student or practice teaching: personally as a "failed" student teacher (Barry Arbreton), as an instructor (Barry Arbreton, J. Gary Knowles, Mary R. Sudzina), or as a supervisor of preservice teachers (Maria Coolican, Knowles, and Sudzina).

[9]Much of the material presented here is based almost directly on the cited paper, nevertheless we also loosely draw on Skrobola & Knowles (1992) and from findings of other researchers. We also consider the experiences of Arbreton (1992) and Coolican (1992).

conducted. Are there, in fact, alternative conceptualizations and structures for achieving the kinds of goals we have for the period of practice prior to provisional certification? Or, do the goals for practice teaching, themselves, need to be thoroughly examined? And, more simply and fundamentally: What are the goals? For the most part, our paper focuses on the first implication, although intuitively we sense attention to the second may eventually be most productive and rewarding for improving formal teacher preparation–but it is also the most difficult to address.

Within each subset of the implications we present are three central elements. First, we identify particular programmatic elements that contribute to potential problems and discuss practical suggestions for modifying them, considering underlying conditions. As stated, we are especially mindful of the need for high standards of care in our interactions with all preservice teachers, especially, those who give evidence–from their participation in the activities of the school and university–of being potentially unsuccessful student or practice teachers. Second, there are many questions which arise as a result of extending these implications; these are questions related to the practical implementation of alternatives, and questions embedded in ethical concerns. Clearly, we do not have answers. Our work primarily poses questions (although some of the questions have obvious answers). Many of the perplexing issues emanate from dilemmas faced by teacher educators. These dilemmas are related to time, finances, personnel, and accreditation requirements, among other things. In the following discussion we expand upon these topics, the boundaries of which are not necessarily clean and discreet.

Modifications of Current Practice

The implications from our findings are obvious. Concerted changes need to occur in the manner in which teacher education programs attract, admit, and

subsequently prepare preservice teachers for student or practice teaching assignments. In addition, there are also implications having to do with the quality of guidance by university and school personnel to ensure productive experiences, opportunities for extensive remediation where evidence points to its value, and the need for some kind of substantial debriefing to help preservice teachers make sense of the practicum experience. Two other concerns are also important, although we don not discuss them here–the relationships of theory to practice, and the scope and expectations of student or practice teaching.

Program Admissions and Selection Criteria

There is a need to reevaluate the usefulness of present structures and screens associated with entry to formal teacher preparation programs. We suspect that there are many institutions which utilize outdated methods to evaluate and test prospective teachers. There is evidence that outdated psychological measures (such as MMPI–Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–and the Meyer-Briggs test) are (still) used at some institutions. Many other programs use a variety of standardized tests of academic performance, providing indicators that, in reality, do little to assist in the really difficult decision-making within the admission process (see, Clark & McNergney, 1990; Lanier & Little, 1986; also, Shields & Daniele, 1981), especially since minimum performance scores are often very low a some institutions (see, Lanier & Little, 1986). Selection of prospective teachers via the admission process must, it seems, be more closely based on the available research about the qualities and predispositions of the most successful of classroom teachers and of the academic preparedness of such exemplary teachers. Again, we stress that we do not support the development of "acceptable" profiles of preservice teachers. On the other hand, and as is presently the case in many programs, a "come one, come

all" approach to developing or stating admission policies is not appropriate either (see, Shields & Daniele, 1981).

We have the notion that, rather than focusing exclusively on quantifiable attributes of potential teachers in the admission process, such as occurs with standardized test scores of academic prowess, we ought to develop other criteria as well. For example, we ought to consider seeking individuals who are prepared to make bold and creative decisions about matters of teaching and learning. The problem of course is how to locate such persons–and this may well be one of the dilemmas facing teacher educators–since many of these individuals may not be typical preservice teacher applicants. Socialization to schools and classrooms through the long apprenticeship of teaching, a result of being students for 16 or more years, has a rather insidious side; many who enter teaching are merely comfortable and complacent with the context of schools and often have little experience of other exciting learning environments. And, based on previous explorations of life histories and beginning teaching, this matter may well be crucial (see, Knowles, 1989, 1990b, 1992; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989).

Further, preservice teachers' prior patterns of academic achievement, coupled with explorations of their experiences of schools and teachers, may provide revealing insights into their potential to effect change in our Nation's schools. Those very accepting of and comfortable with traditional teaching methods, and with rigidly held perspectives, may hold little promise to effect change in schools–even after participation in preparation programs.

Many schools of education have notoriously "easy" admissions standards. The general "low quality" of preservice teacher education candidates has long been a thorn in the flesh of preparation institutions, a condition we believe is improving. Still, it is quite unrealistic to expect to transform every preservice teacher applicant into accomplished beginning teachers (see, Lanier & Little,

1986). Further, when we place individuals' future lives on the line, as we do in the admissions process, it may be quite unethical for programs to admit individuals whose philosophical orientations, and other personal and intellectual qualities, point to obviously massive mismatches between individual and institutional views of the educational world of schools. The kinds of mismatches that sometimes result may eventually lead to serious mis-educative experiences for prospective teachers and others, such as facilitating or cooperating teachers.

In exploring those who "failed" student or practice teaching, we sense that there are considerable numbers who count their experiences in schools of education–and related field placements–as being mis-educative. Many such mis-educative experiences seem to center on teacher educators' and programs' lack of attention to the quality of field placements and the resulting supervision and evaluation of beginners' practice.

Explicit, published statements about thematic orientations of programs and clear articulation of their philosophical underpinnings may help weld and focus programmatic goals in the thinking of preservice teachers. And, besides, they may provide greater elements of choice for potential teachers, enabling more appropriate decisions about the status of future careers. Large teacher education programs offering only one thematic perspective, for example, may better serve the range of prospective teachers by offering multiple, thematic orientations to teacher preparation as, for example, is (or was) done at Michigan State University and other institutions.[10] In other words, programs and individuals may benefit from greater and more flexible program alternatives[11] whose goals and

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[10]Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons some programs are moving away from such positions.

[11]Flexibility of teacher education programs may well need to be wrestled from the control of state legislative bodies and state departments of education. Perhaps teacher educators have been far too faint in the objections to state and professional body standards and coursework impositions.

philosophical foundations are revealed in detail before the application process begins.

In addition, given the high incidence of subject matter incompetence evident from the records of those who "failed", greater attention should be placed on facilitating the highest levels of subject matter expertise in prospective teachers. It is a gross mistake to foster academic and subject matter mediocrity in future teachers, even when their "other" characteristics and qualities are viewed as "acceptable" for the teaching profession. Often, for example, teacher educators are induced into supporting mediocre prospective teachers by assigning passing grades, for example, simply because those individuals excel at some teaching-related tasks. This is a mistake which has probably influenced the low status of the teaching profession in the minds of some. But, this renewed emphasis on development of subject matter expertise is insufficient in itself–it must be mirrored by the development of high levels of proficiency in translating academic content knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge. Extensive attention to this matter is central to resolving some of the problems associated with those who "fail".

The predominance of "junior professor" mentalities among some student or practice teachers should be of little surprise since many teaching methods courses are, by their very structure, unable by to substantially transform university liberal arts perspectives and orientations towards subject matter[12] into useful constructs for elementary and secondary students. When subject matter is construed as being "delivered", as in the thinking of "junior professor" prospective teachers, there are resulting restrictions in the way individuals think about

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[12]To blame university liberal arts perspectives may be over stated. In essence we mean those perspectives which place the role of teacher as teller and dispenser of knowledge, a person who as center of the classroom is responsible for filling students with knowledge and understanding. This kind of orientation implies reliance on the lecture method.

pedagogy. Development of subject matter pedagogy needs, we believe, to be placed at the highest level of priority in teacher education.

Low levels of academic subject matter knowledge may be especially evident in otherwise "first-rate" second-career preservice teachers.[13] The lag in subject matter preparation, particularly as evidenced by out-dated degrees, and opportunities for teaching that subject matter often hampers these individuals, and special care needs to be afforded in the selection and preparation of this particular group of potential teachers (Bullough & Knowles, 1990). It is not appropriate to accept at face value outdated transcripts and experience without offering substantial opportunities to update or improve subject matter expertise as relevant to schools and classroom teaching. Yet, to encourage improvements in subject matter expertise for these prospective teachers through traditional course work may unnecessarily discourage and confound the process of learning to teach. These otherwise competent individuals who are considering the profession of teaching may well be overcome by the complexity of yet another set of standards. And, of course, we would expect that the more determined of these individuals may "shop around", seeking institutional programs which offer them paths of least resistance. Conventional approaches to improvement of subject matter expertise–that is, "take another course–may get in the way of the professional development of these potential new teachers.

Moreover, the kinds and modes of preparation offered in traditional teacher education programs serving young, adult life experience-deficit, undergraduate preservice teachers may be entirely unsuited to the preparation of more mature individuals and, quite frankly we should not expect the case to be otherwise. Teacher educators have possibly lagged in presenting programs that are

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[13]By "first rate" we mean potential teachers who have, other than current academic subject matter knowledge, very acceptable attributes and skills associated with becoming and being a teacher.

andragogically sound–that is, using a pedagogy which carefully consider the needs of adult learners. Thus, such programs may be better informed by the literature concerning mature adult learners (see, Knowles, 1970, 1980). We continue with questions.

Practical questions.

• Are programmatic goals and philosophies clearly and extensively articulated for potential preservice teachers?

• To what extent are selection criteria for entry to preservice teacher education programs consistent with articulated programmatic goals and perspectives? And: Are there high levels of internal consistency between selection criteria, programmatic goals, and other programmatic elements?

• Are selection criteria consistent with notions of high levels of academic and pedagogical excellence in teaching?

• What are the alternatives for screening entry to preservice teacher education programs? And: To what extent does the research base inform this matter?

• How are individuals identified who may have severe difficulties with the philosophical foundations of particular teacher preparation programs (that is, with particular orientations to teaching and learning)? At what point do contradictory viewpoints (between those of programs and those individuals) become dysfunctional so as to impede the professional growth of preservice teachers?

• What are useful criteria to apply in the admissions process? What does the research base suggest about this matter?

• How do programs select potentially dynamic, creative, innovative prospective teachers? And: What are useful criteria for this task?

Ethical questions.

• How can the research base inform the development of ethical selection criteria? And: What are ethically appropriate ways to select individuals for admission?

• Is it ethically appropriate to select individuals who are seriously at odds with the public school system (or other systems for whom particular programs serve)? Or: Should there be high levels of compatibility between the thinking of prospective teachers and the prevalent practices?

• To what extent should program admissions procedures probe into the orientations of prospective teachers?

• Who makes the decisions about the admission process? Further: Who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that ethical procedures are adopted?

• What are the ethical responsibilities of programs towards individuals? And: How can these be more carefully defined so as to enhance the preparation of ethically-responsible new teachers?

• Are applicants likely to feel advantaged by attention to ethical concerns associated with the admissions process?

• To what extent during the application process are matches encouraged between individual and programmatic perspectives and orientations? Further: To what extent is it unethical to <u>not</u> extensively reveal programmatic perspectives and the implications of those perspectives? And: How can programmatic perspectives be made more meaningful to applicants to preservice teacher education programs?

• How can institutions assist prospective teachers to interpret programmatic perspectives so that massive mismatches will not occur when those admitted are–philosophically speaking–seriously at odds with program perspectives and the work of teaching in public (or private) schools?

<u>Ongoing Intensive Counseling and Guidance</u>

Many "failed" preservice teachers may have benefited from intensive, ongoing counseling, and this may have performed two functions for them. First,

it may bring to firm realization their inadequacies or lack of preparedness for teaching and, second, it may suggest remedial activities and alternative courses of action for readying themselves for either continuing in the program or exiting. In other words, intense counseling may either enhance preservice teachers' professional development–their readiness to teach–or assist them in exploring alternative professions. Many "failed" individuals claimed to know nothing of the seriousness of their situations, or the precariousness of their prospects for succeeding and gaining teaching certificates, until immediately prior to receiving their "failing" grade and / or being withdrawn from practice teaching. In analyzing their predicaments, many of these individuals faulted personnel and faculty with programmatic responsibilities. Some also faulted program content and structures, and they counted their experiences in such programs as mis-educative, as not serving their best good and ongoing professional development.

Regular, intensive, direct, honest, formative and summative evaluations–both face to face and confidential–could alert prospective teachers to the seriousness with which they should approach their preparation. And this, especially, may ultimately benefit the many men whom, we sense, take more lightly than women the process of learning to teach, relying more intently on their "natural talents"–a position that is clearly not productive for their professional development. Undoubtedly, the kinds of evaluations we envisage may feel threatening to some prospective teachers. Nevertheless, these activities would serve to introduce more personalized and individualized programs of preparation for prospective teachers, especially second-career individuals who may well be "overly prepared" in some areas and "under prepared" in others.

Too often, it seems, instructors, counselors, and advisors only superficially examine preservice teachers' long-held views of schooling and teaching, course work and practicum experiences, orientations and preferences for teaching, and

their preparedness to teach. Current formats and modes of operation do not generally allow otherwise. As a result, windows of opportunity for effective guidance and counseling are lost. We do not suggest that counseling and guidance be simply more of the same, rather, that the roles of evaluating, monitoring, guiding, and counseling take on different degrees of intensity and purpose. This suggests, for example, the need for pinpointing prospective teachers' strengths and weaknesses and, accordingly, designing individualized programs of professional development which meet their specific needs. It is unrealistic and ineffective to insist that all prospective teachers associated with any one program be exposed to the same course work, given the extensive variations in life experiences and competencies evident in the readiness to teach of students of teaching. And, this is especially true for second-career teachers.

Practical questions.

- To what extent are present approaches to advising and guiding preservice teachers adequate and / or inadequate?
- How can regular, ongoing monitoring and evaluations of preservice teachers' preparedness to teach best serve these individuals? And: Who should be responsible for such monitoring and evaluation? What models for developing shared (that is, between preservice teacher, faculty instructors, university supervisors, cooperating teachers et cetera) evaluation programs are available?
- How can scarce financial resources be most appropriately used to facilitate changes in guidance and counseling procedures and processes?
- What are the practical issues in developing intensive, ongoing evaluation and monitoring of preservice teachers' professional development and readiness to teach?
- What kinds of pre-practica preparation activities are optimum for preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers?

Ethical questions.

• To what extent do teacher educators' ethical responsibilities towards preservice teachers include responsive advising and counseling?

• What ethical dilemmas can be anticipated when enhanced advising and counseling programs are established?

• What are the ethical issues evident when preservice teachers' professional development is monitored more closely?

Appropriate Contexts for Practice

Dilemmas and difficulties arise when preservice teachers internalized models of teachers and classrooms–based on their own school experiences and / or from models presented in teacher preparation programs[14]–do not match models they encounter in schools and classrooms. In addition, some cooperating teachers are unable to mentor preservice teachers in productive ways, to help them negotiate the gaps between internalized role models and the realities they find in placement schools. And, from our vantage point, these kinds of mentors should not be virtually solely responsible for the development and facilitation of competent practice in prospective teachers. Other key and influential players are sorely needed; practica present opportunities for a variety of personnel from teacher education programs, not just those designated "supervisory personnel", to be involved.

One of perhaps many ways in which schools of education can respond to these gaps and mismatches is through multiple field-experience placements for prospective teachers. For example, in several instances, individuals who had unsatisfactory student or practice teaching experiences, and who were obviously

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[14]We sense, however, that there is probably less internalization of models of teaching as presented in teacher education programs, thus, when in placements in which there is dissonance with those models from preservice teacher education programs, considerable confusion in their thinking may occur.

not going to be assigned passing grades or be recommended for teacher certification, were removed from their original placements. They were given new placements in completely different contexts. Some succeeded, others "failed" a second time. If preservice teachers have remotely unsatisfactory field placement experiences at any level prior to the capstone student or practice teaching experience it is entirely conceivable that, given generally impersonal school placement policies and lack of documentation, individuals could again be placed in a similar positions for student or practice teaching–and with disastrous results. These kinds of situations also underscore the importance of close monitoring of experiences and progress, and frank discussions about and debriefing from the experience. Sensitive and methodical placements producing mild cognitive dissonance, appropriate for inducing appropriate levels of cognitive changes, are in order.

The practice of placing student or practice teachers in classrooms according to close convenience–in reality, gas money considerations–for supervising personnel is clearly in question. If budgetary limitations and convenience threaten to dictate placements in schools, either because of the lack of preparation of cooperating teachers or restrictions on the numbers of supervision sites and the need for few faculty to supervise large numbers of student or practice teachers, programs need to cautiously reconsider their ethical responsibilities to prospective teachers.

Clearly, greater attention needs to be given to both preparing preservice teachers for extended classroom placements and preparing cooperating teachers for extended participation and interaction with developing beginners. The latter has been recognized as a serious flaw in preservice teacher preparation. Nevertheless, it is disconcerting that many teacher educators have long-paid scant attention to the seriousness and importance of the position held by the

mentor teacher in the development of autonomous and progressive new teachers. This is especially critical in the cases of second or third career preservice teachers who often have had less direct contact in schools prior to student or practice teaching than undergraduates in traditional programs, and, as graduate students, often in accelerated programs, they may have significantly shortened practica. Massive discontinuities between philosophies of programs, preservice teachers, university faculty, and cooperating schools and teachers, do nothing to develop the professional competencies of new teachers as individuals able to make significant inroads into the dilemmas and complexities of contemporary and future schools. Inattention to the development of significant levels of compatibility between the key players, especially between the program goals and those of the school site, serve to maintain the status quo in schools and does nothing to develop new kinds of teaching which serve to meet the different and difficult challenges facing young or inexperienced teachers.

All that we have said thus far apples to individuals as well as to groups of prospective teachers. Some problems associated with the practicum may be alleviated by placing small clusters or cohorts of preservice teachers together in schools and classrooms. We are not merely talking about placing a group of peers in separate classrooms within the one school. In the contexts envisaged, the direct purpose is to encourage mutual support, collaborative and cooperative preparation, teaching, evaluation, and generally attempting to dispel the notion that teaching is performed in isolation and behind closed doors–a model of the profession that is all too prevalent[15].

Practical questions.

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[15]This kind of group focus on teaching could also extend to the first years of teaching. What if school districts were encouraged to employ teams of new teacher who shared similar visions and philosophies of teaching and were already a cohesive and interactive group of new professionals?

• How can resource constraints be overcome so that more attention can be given to contexts of practice, including supervision and placement issues?

• To what extent are preservice teachers' field placements (including those for student or practice teaching) chosen with an eye to modeling and encouraging "best" practice and contexts for practice?

• Are school classrooms the only places where exemplary teaching practices may be found? Where else? And, how can other teaching contexts be accessed?

Ethical questions.

• What levels of practica support for student or practice teachers are practically viable and ethically responsible?

• To what extent are cooperating or facilitating teachers models of ethical, caring, and responsible mentors?

• Is it ethically responsible to base preservice teachers' "capstone" field placement experience on one intense student or practice teaching experience?

Effective Supervision and Facilitation of Appropriate Practice

Supervision of student or practice teachers has traditionally been more summative than formative in its evaluative intent. But, more than a need to provide formative feedback and guidance, changes in the intensity and structure of supervision may be advantageous to many prospective teachers. Irreconcilable and internally inconsistent models of supervision were mis-educative for some individuals who "failed". And, we suspect, supervisory practices have not constructively facilitated the professional development of many other students of teaching. Greater levels of congruence between personalities and philosophies of prospective teachers and supervisors may prove productive, as would different roles of supervisors. We argue that the field placement is one of the most important decisions of preservice teacher preparation because it hold promise to facilitate bringing together those who are concerned about theory and practice.

And, further, the associated supervision of that experience should not fall to the least experienced nor the least theoretical of university personnel.

Reconceptions of the role of supervisors and supervision, we sense, are crucial. For example, greater levels of classroom participation by supervisors may be very productive; engaging is such activities as team teaching, modeling, and problem-solving at more intense levels than are currently common. Further, large numbers of preservice teachers can not be adequately guided by one supervisor. We suggest that university supervisors have responsibility for intimate, small groups of preservice teachers in an effort to personalize process evaluation and guidance and to achieve more closely desired ends. Many of the "failed" preservice teachers were unaware how badly they were performing until well into their practicum. Certainly, more intense contact with supervisors over the duration of program participation and practica has potential for alleviating many major difficulties in the period of practice before such difficulties become seriously destructive to prospective careers and become mis-educative experiences in the process. This thinking also speaks to the need for extending the period of induction beyond student or practice teaching, past even the first year of service, well into the early period of becoming a teacher.

In several cases of "failed" practice teachers there was a lack of openness regarding the evaluation process. We sense that there are still programs in which evaluation is not openly conducted. In such contexts evaluation is one sided, in that input is not sought from all parties, and does not serve preservice teachers or the program well. In such contexts, excluding the voice of preservice teachers may seem to be in the short run, the least complicated and the most expedient course of action. But, the long-term effects of such actions may be personally disastrous for some would-be teachers.

In addition to issues surrounding university supervisors' evaluations of preservice teachers, more appropriate supervision and mentorship by school personnel is also important. Ways to achieve greater coherence between teaching philosophies and facilitation of practice of university supervisors and school cooperating / facilitating teachers also desperately needs to occur.

Teacher educators have traditionally thought of university supervisors or school personnel as providing supervision but there may be other alternatives. For example, preservice teachers could be made responsible for soliciting evaluations of their practice. While we do not endorse nepotistic kinds of relationships between preservice teachers and supervisors, we do think that by placing responsibilities for evaluation and formative feedback partially in the hands of preservice teachers themselves an opportunity for personal and professional empowerment is presented. Thus not only would individuals learning to teach have some control over the foci of evaluations of their practice but they would have some control over the intent and purpose of that evaluation. One way to do this without nepotism reigning supreme is to provide a framework of criteria within which selection of a variety of persons who would conduct evaluation be selected. In thinking about who might conduct such evaluations, the preservice teacher would be free to select a wide range of "qualified" people who may well come from inside and outside of "education".

Practical questions.

- To what extent are supervisors of practice teachers bona fide members of the teacher education faculty? More specifically: Are supervisors well-qualified for their roles? And: To what extent is it realistic for faculty to be expected to participate in supervisory activities given the demands of researching, writing, and service activities?

• To what extent are supervisors involved in other aspects of preservice preparation programs? Further: Are their perspectives of teaching compatible with the tenor of other elements of preparation programs? Is there coherence between programmatic goals and supervisors' goals and expectations for practice teachers?

• What are the bases for selection of supervisors and cooperating teachers? To what extent does compatibility with programmatic goals figure in the selection process?

• Who are evaluators and supervisors? Moreover: Do they have to be only university supervisors or school-based cooperating teachers, and other school personnel, directly assigned the task? To what extent can evaluation be performed by peers, other teachers and administrators, friends, other professionals, or other university faculty? Thus: To what extent can preservice teachers be placed in charge of brokering their own evaluation?

Ethical questions.

• When differing perspectives and expectations of teaching and of the evaluation process exist between supervisors, cooperating or facilitating teachers, and preservice teachers, how are problems resolved? What course of action can practice teachers take if they feel unjustly evaluated?

• Is it ethical to have few (usually two) primary evaluators of preservice teachers' major practica experiences?

• What is the explicit message given to practice or student teachers when they are paired with a "mentor" whom they have never met before or with they have serious differences? Is this responsible and ethical? Thus: What roles should preservice teachers have in the selection of such mentors?

Remediation Opportunities

As preservice teachers find their developing conceptions of teaching to be inadequate, especially for tasks associated with the practicum, opportunities should be proved for them to modify their thinking and conceptualizations of practice. Potentially most productive, we sense, are opportunities to examine those aspects of their developing practice which hinder their professional development and their acceptance by students and experienced classroom teachers. On some occasions this may entail retaking or extending particular academic classes or courses, gaining more substantial experiential and theoretical bases for their actions. In other cases it may mean embarking on an array of independent or small group studies, engaging in participatory or observational field experiences including research projects, reevaluation of their vocational goals, receiving ongoing counseling, or other such guided activities. These kinds of possibilities may enable individuals to overcome recognized weaknesses or deficiencies in their preparedness to teach. This kind of approach calls for greater flexibility in program requirements than we currently witness. But, it does put the individual, emerging teacher fairly and squarely in control of their own professional development. Teacher educators, therefore, must not be weak-kneed about the prospect of asserting remediation in persons found inadequately prepared for field placements. At the same time, however, preservice teachers need to be responsible for their preparation and remediation and, in this regard, the balance between counseling and insistence upon remediation will be fine indeed. Conversely, notions of traditional forms of remediation–simply taking just another course–may be better avoided. And, these kinds of modifications demand creative translation of state-mandated requirements into productive experiences for prospective teachers.

Practical questions.

• Are there specific opportunities to observe and remediate preservice teachers' potential problems in the early stages of teacher preparation programs?

• Do teacher educators openly reflect on their shortcomings and failures (as well as their more successful accomplishments and pedagogies) in the presence of preservice teachers? And: Do teacher educators model reflective conversations which encourage preservice teachers to do the same? Further, to what extent are preservice teachers encouraged to seek assistance when sensing professional difficulties?

Ethical questions.

• To what extent are remediation opportunities a right rather than a privilege (as we sense some teacher educators may argue)?

• When do opportunities for remediation become superfluous or unproductive? And: How long do program faculty persevere with preservice teachers whose level of readiness to teach suggests potential and major problems in the field experience?

• Are there clear and sufficient explicit criteria by which to fairly and ethically evaluate the performance of preservice teachers' progress or professional development, or lack thereof? And, do preservice teachers have access to or knowledge of this information? Is it clearly articulated to them?

• What is the ethical responsibility, if any, of programs to ensure that only "well-qualified and prepared" preservice teachers enter the field?

Exit Counseling and Vocational Guidance

For those individuals who actually "fail" in their student or practice teaching endeavors, it is necessary to provide extensive and intensive guidance and support. The damning nature of "failure" rips at the cords of self-esteem, and individuals need opportunities to talk through such damning experiences. They also need time to accept the reality of their situations. Ideally, this might be best

accomplished if individuals were assigned specific teacher educators as mentors who closely monitored preservice teachers' progress (or lack of it) throughout the program and at levels more intense than typically seen in current practices.[16] Being attuned to individuals' desires, intentions, weaknesses, and strengths, such mentors and counselors could facilitate the overcoming of personal and professional tragedies related to "failure" or near "failure". Sound vocational guidance, exploring other satisfying vocational options, is also essential at this point.

Further, all student or practice teachers could benefit from extensive "debriefings"[17] from their experiences in schools and classrooms, helping them to make sense of complex and often ill-understood events and circumstances. And, this could be done within cohort groups and, where useful, individually. It may well be more conceptually and internally consistent to organize student or practice teaching on an experiential education model in which greater levels of attention are focused on making meaning out of the experience itself (see, Joplin, 1981; Knowles, 1990a). Too often, prospective teachers are flung to the socialization forces of schools as beginning teachers without the benefit of being able to substantially make sense of their first extensive period of practice. Moreover, recommendations for employment do not serve the purpose of debriefing. And, by debriefing we mean extensive conversations and discussions about the experiences. Thus, one of the explicit purposes is to understand the meanings of the experiences and provide a framework for future actions. And, we do not think this can be achieved in one seminar consisting of an hour long period–it is probably a prolonged process for many.

Practical questions.

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[16]We do not intent this to be more of the same; we specifically think the quality of guidance must improve in intensity and commitment.

[17]We only use this term for lack of a better one.

• Is there a structure or process in place which enables preservice teachers' to successfully deal with their termination or "failure" in field settings?

• Are vocational and personal counseling available for those who "fail" student or practice teaching? Is counseling available for those who withdraw from or leave programs of teacher preparation–even before the final practica?

• To what extent are university faculty and supervisors prepared for the process of making difficult decisions about the professional development / readiness of preservice teachers? And: To what extent are they able to deal with "failure" of those under their care?

Ethical questions.

• Are preservice teachers treated with care so that those who perform poorly in the classroom (in practica settings) are not cloaked with an all pervasive gown of generalized failure? Thus: Is "failure" in the classroom not transferred to other arenas?

• Are financial and other considerations, including personal circumstances, addressed when terminating preservice teachers from programs? And: Are these concerns responsibly and ethically addressed?

Exploring Alternative Models of Practice

While others have explored the pitfalls and advantages of student or practice teaching (e.g., Feiman-Nemeses & Buchmann, 1986) and have brought into question its value and assumptions about its structure, we believe it is important to attend to the matter further. We are not convinced that it serves well the preparation for practice of many individuals. We noted several cases where the context, duration, focus, and intensity of the experience was most mis-educative. Further, student or practice teaching is traditionally thought of as a capstone experience, a view which needs to be broadened and integrated to include other experiences important in the process of learning to teach. To have

one's prospective professional success rest on one kind of experience is not ultimately helpful for the development of exemplary practices. Notions of prospective teachers being guided by only one cooperating teacher through singular placements could give way to multiple placements over shorter durations and over the entire course of one's preparation program. Or, it could include more sustained placements. It could also include group participation in schools and classrooms over prolonged periods. These are not new recommendations but, indeed, if teachers of tomorrow are to be prepared to meet the multiple demands of complex and depressed urban environments, and the variety of other contexts found in a culturally pluralistic society, then extensive opportunities for teaching in other than the most traditional school settings is in order.

Further, to limit those experiences to grade level settings synonymous with the level of most comfort, or certification level sought, blinds the perspectives of prospective teachers, limiting their professional knowledge about learning over various stages of the human life span. This is analogous to placing blinders on a draught horse, a practice intended to restrict viewpoints and directions of travel. Elementary teacher certification candidates may benefit from working in preschools and high schools. Secondary majors may learn much from preschools and elementary school classrooms. Similarly, to view teaching and learning as only the domain of public and private schools is a mistake. Besides, having opportunities to observe and practice in public and private schools, recognition must be given to the fact that there are many other sites in which effective examples of teachers teaching and learners learning occur. Some of these sites include community centers, recreation centers, clubs of various kinds, summer camps and day programs, tutoring centers, neighborhood learning groups / centers, parent operated instructional groups, and even parent taught home

schools. Teacher preparation institutions would be well-served to encourage the use of these multiple sites for serious practicum experiences and not treat them as the domain of informal summer work experiences. As teacher educators, we have great responsibilities associated with developing the professional practices of new teachers who can instruct and assist learners in these various settings that are sure to make up the multiple learning contexts of early 20th Century North America.

Summary

High standards of ethical caring imply a variety of programmatic and professorial actions in preservice teacher preparation: more selective admission criteria; more early, sensitive, personal, and appropriate career guidance; early remedial activities or direct exit counseling; enhanced and more intense supervision of student or practice teachers; more responsible and responsive placements of practice teachers with cooperating teachers (who have perspectives that are not massively incongruent with those of the practice teachers under their tutelage and who reflect appropriate levels of compatibility with the preparation program); and, debriefing during and after student or practice teaching. But, in the process, these issue also raise the possibility that the current major practicum model in teacher preparation may be outdated.

Finally

The scant attention to the matter of "failure" in the research literature on teacher preparation verifies the need for more research on the matter. Our research on "failure" allowed us relatively translucent windows to our own practices. In particular, understandings about the antecedents of "failure" (see Table 1), and ways to remedy the various situations which induce this phenomenon, are sorely needed. We have barely scratched the surface. In making our analysis of "failure", and in developing what we think are productive

implications, we have provided a useful criticism that may be helpful as we enter a new era in preservice teacher education.

Ethical considerations in dealing with failed student teachers.

Modeling a humane and caring attitude: Putting our belief systems on the line in teacher education.

Importance

- metaphors of comfort (Alesia McLeod)

after an experience there are those who want to talk about the experience

others want to forget about the experience

others want to transcend the experience

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Table 1: Categories for Understanding "Failure"

"Failure" is imbedded in

1. Personal history-based characteristics
   - i. Patterns of social interactions and personality
     - Personal interaction skills with professors and others
     - Social habits and acceptance by peers
   - ii. Academic history
     - Standardized test scores
     - Academic grade point average
     - Work habits / academic responsibility
   - iii. Knowledge of self as teacher
     - Previous role models of teaching
     - Familiarity with expectations of teachers
     - Degree of comfort working in schools and classrooms
2. Proficiency at expected teaching / professional practices
   - i. Scope of content area knowledge preparation
     - Proficiency of content area knowledge
     - Interpretation of content knowledge for students
     - Enthusiasm for content knowledge
   - ii. Curriculum and planning skills
     - Clear lesson plans and objectives
     - Organization and planning skills
     - Uses variety of curriculum methods
     - Consideration of students' developmental needs
   - iii. Classroom management and discipline
3. Externally imposed (contemporary) factors
   - i. Personal circumstances
     - Marital / relational pressures
     - Financial needs
     - Occupational interference
     - Health problems
   - ii. Student / practice teaching contexts
     - Interactions with university supervisor
     - Interactions with cooperating teacher
     - Interactions with students
     - Response/interactions with parents
     - Incongruent subject matter / grade level placement
     - Practicum attendance and professional conduct
     - Adjustment to school setting / culture